

CLAIMS:

1. A method of automatically determining a reading of a Japanese word; the method including:
- receiving an input string of at least one character representing the Japanese word;
- 5 choosing for each character of the Japanese word a corresponding reading, by:
- for each character determining whether the character is a kanji, hiragana, or katakana character;
 - for a hiragana or katakana character choosing the only one reading associated with the character; and
 - 10 - for a kanji character determining whether or not the immediately preceding character and/or the immediately succeeding character is also a kanji character; and choosing for the kanji character an on-reading associated with the kanji character if the immediately preceding character and/or the immediately succeeding character in the word is also a kanji character, and
 - 15 choosing a kun-reading associated with the kanji character otherwise; concatenating the corresponding readings of each character of the Japanese word; and
 - outputting the concatenated reading.
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2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein for a kanji character that in the word is not immediately preceded or succeeded by a kanji character, the method includes choosing a most frequent one of a plurality of kun-readings associated with the kanji character.

3. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein for a kanji character that in the word is immediately preceded or succeeded by at least one kanji character, the method includes
5 choosing a most frequent one of a plurality of on-readings associated with the kanji character.
4. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein the step of choosing a most frequent one of a plurality of on-readings associated with the kanji character includes selecting a group of a plurality of sequential kanji characters in the word, including the kanji character being
10 converted, and choosing a most frequent one of a plurality of on-readings associated with the group of kanji characters.
5. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein each hiragana character is associated with one reading; and the method includes for a hiragana character of the word choosing the
15 associated reading.
6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein each katakana character is associated with a corresponding hiragana character; and the method includes for a hiragana character of the word choosing the reading associated with the hiragana character
20 corresponding to the katakana character.
7. A computer program product operative to cause a processor to perform the method as claimed in claim 1.

8. A system for automatically determining a reading of a Japanese word includes:
- 5 an input for receiving an input string of at least one character representing the Japanese word;
- a memory for storing:
- for hiragana characters a respective associated reading;
- for katakana characters a respective associated reading; and
- 10 for a kanji character a respective associated on-reading and a respective associated kun-reading;
- a processor for determining for each character of the Japanese word a corresponding reading, by:
- for each character determining whether the character is a kanji, hiragana, or
 - 15 katakana character;
 - for a hiragana or katakana character choosing the stored reading associated with the character; and
 - for a kanji character determining whether or not the immediately preceding character and/or the immediately succeeding character is also a kanji
 - 20 character; and choosing for the kanji character the on-reading associated with the kanji character if the immediately preceding character and/or the immediately succeeding character in the word is also a kanji character, and choosing the kun-reading associated with the kanji character otherwise; and
- for concatenating the corresponding readings of each character of the
- 25 Japanese word; and
- an output for outputting the concatenated reading.